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ABSTRACT

Some of the schooling experiences of a rapidly expanding migrant population from the Dominican Republic are described in this paper. In doing this, the paper examines the societal and organizational context of the educational system in the Dominican Republic, and briefly outlines the organization of and practices in Dominican classrooms, the nature of teacher-student interaction styles, and the relationship between school and home life. Information about school organization and classrooms is obtained through interviews with professors, school directors, teachers, parents, and students. In addition to general interviewing, two public schools were selected for more systematic observations. To check whether the data collected in the two schools were representative of schools in the Dominican Republic, observations were then made in additional public and private schools. It was found that whatever difficulties educators and students in the Dominican Republic encounter in the educational process, education itself is accorded the highest priority throughout the country. Despite many obstacles, the majority of those classroom teachers and school directors conduct classroom programs that allow students to meet the country's educational standards. Dominican children coming to the U.S. bring with them certain expectations based on their experiences in their native educational system. They find themselves attending schools embedded in a different social context, which fact for many of them, leads to confusion and conflict. (Author/AM)

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SCHOOLING IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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Classroom teachers are often the people who experience most directly the impact of the influx of migrations to the United States. Usually they must undertake the education of immigrant children with little background information about their prior school experience. The purpose of this paper is to describe some of the schooling experiences of a rapidly expanding migrant population from the Dominican Republic.[1] In doing this, the paper will examine the societal and organizational context of the educational system in the Dominican Republic as well as briefly outline the organization of and practices in Dominican classrooms, teacher-student interaction styles, and the relationship between school and home life.

Information about school organization and classrooms comes from several sources. Interviews were conducted in the Dominican Republic with professors of education at universities and normal schools, with school directors and teachers in urban and rural areas, and with parents and students. In addition to general interviewing, two public schools--one in the North-Central rural area and the other in the capital, Santo Domingo--were selected for more systematic observations. These particular schools were chosen for two reasons: (a) a large proportion of residents of the areas in which they are located have migrated to New York City, and (b) the areas have student populations with socioeconomic backgrounds similar to those of many of the Dominican students attending New York City public schools. Observations in these schools were conducted for a week or more. Because of double sessions, it was often possible to observe two schools in the same location.

To check whether the data collected in the two schools was representative of

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[1] This paper is part of a larger study of elementary school children from the Dominican Republic.

schools in the Dominican Republic, observations were then made in additional public and private schools. These schools were also selected to match socioeconomic and geographical migration patterns, but observations were selective and limited to a day or two. In total, approximately three months were spent in classroom observation and interviewing of educators.

New York City historically has been the recipient of many of the economic and political refugees entering the United States. In recent years, the city has seen a steady arrival of Latin American and Spanish-speaking Caribbean migrants who are seeking improved economic situations for themselves and their families. Acute inflation and unemployment problems in the Dominican Repbulic have contributed to a large influx of individuals from this particular Caribbean country. Dominican residents in New York City numbered approximately 285,000 in 1973 and by 1976 probably will exceed 300,000 (New York Times, January 28, 1973).

The migration to the United States is part of an internal rural-urban migration process occurring in the Dominican Republic. As economic opportunities shift from the agricultural sector to urban industrialized areas, the population has also been moving. However, internal growth has not developed sufficient job opportunities to meet the economic demands of the urbanizing population. Consequently, the search for better economic opportunities has extended from the Dominican Republic to New York City, which has become the end point for the economically mobile individual or family (Hendricks, 1974; Gonzales, 1970). Dominicans are coming to work in New York City, hoping to acquire sufficient economic advantage to enable them to return to their native economic system at a more competitive level.

The expansion of this migrant group manifests itself in numerous ways in New York City. Residential neighborhood patterns are shifting and several areas in the city are now identified as Dominican neighborhoods, with shops selling Dominican products. As the shifting of residential patterns takes place, Dominican children have become the dominant ethnic group in some public schools.

Historical Background

Free schooling for all citizens was introduced in the Dominican Republic in 1845, following the end of the colonial period and the establishment of independence in 1844.[2] The education declaration of 1845 called for one primary school to be set up in each of the more populated communities and two in the provincial capitals. Classes were separated by sex and attendance was voluntary.

After independence was declared, the Dominican Republic went through a period of stabilization and a succession of governors. Education did not receive significant national attention again until 1880, when Eugenio Maria de Hostos, a Puerto Rican educator, opened the first school to provide formal training for teachers.

Schooling continued only in the more populated areas and on a voluntary basis until 1912, when the first rural education act was passed. The act allowed inhabitants in rural areas to organize school committees to supervise primary schools. It was the responsibility of the committees to provide one half of the cost of the schools, with the state supplying the rest. The schools, escuelas rudimentarios, followed a

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[2]The author is indebted to Professor Rafael D. Lora Beltran of Universidad Nacional Pedro Henriquez Urena, Santo Domingo, who so graciously shared his lecture notes on the history of education in the Dominican Republic. Any deficiencies or misrepresentations in this section are obviously those of the author.

curriculum designed for agricultural preparation and general literacy and provided, at the most, a primary education.

Compulsory education for children aged seven to fourteen was legislated in 1918. At this time the country was under the control of a United States occupational force. In addition to imposing internal military and monetary regulations, the appointed military governor directed an education "reform." A committee was established to develop fundamental primary and secondary school curricula and school organization. Schools became coeducational for the first time. The traditional system of six-year primary and secondary programs was modified in some areas of the country when the committee introduced the American concept of a four-year high school. Some schools changed to an eight-year elementary system, some to a K-6/intermediate/high school format, while the majority continued the traditional six-year/six-year European division. Despite the confusion in the organizational format, the curriculum in elementary schools continued to emphasize basic literacy, reading, and writing.

The introduction of obligatory education created considerable strain on the existing educational system's facilities. To accommodate the increase in the number of school children, double sessions were organized. This essentially allowed the operation of two schools in the same physical plant with one faculty to teach two sets of children.

Classroom instruction continued to be hampered because of a severe shortage of teachers. American overseers suggested preparing high school students to enter the teachers' force and a teacher training program was incorporated into the traditional academic secondary school curriculum. After four years of basic studies, students were tracked to social sciences, science and mathematics, or teacher training

programs. However, the inclusion of teacher training in the secondary school curriculum produced neither sufficient numbers of teachers nor adequately prepared ones. At this time training was limited to classroom discussions and most graduates had difficulty when placed in actual classroom situations.

Although the introduction of compulsory education greatly expanded the elementary schools, the organizational and curricular developments undertaken during this period did not result in a similar expansion of the secondary school program. Most secondary schools were in the populated areas, whereas the majority of the population lived scattered in the rural areas. In addition, the economic structure of the first part of the twentieth century did not permit many families, even in the urban areas, to provide more than the basic education for their children.

Economic Background

Today the Dominican Republic continues to face great problems in providing for the needs of its school age population. Some statistics on the characteristics of the society in general help to illuminate the societal conditions that in part underlie the pedagogical problems.

The age distribution of the population places peak demands upon education and health services. As in other developing countries, a high percentage of the population of the Dominican Republic is of school age. Dividing the population of 4,006,405 into age groups, one finds that almost half the population is under 15 years of age. The working-age group, ages 15 to 64, numbers 49.3 percent, while 47.5 percent of the population are under 15 years of age. Those over 65 account for only 3.2 percent.

The general trend to a more urbanized population requires the continual reassessment of the allocation of educational resources. In 1920, 83 percent of the population lived in the rural areas. By 1950 this had dropped to 76 percent and the 1970 census reported that the population continuing to live in the countryside had declined to 60 percent (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 32).

The migration to urban areas has not resulted in improved economic conditions. Unemployment, underemployment, and low wages for the majority of the population are chronic problems. In 1970, approximately 24 percent of the working force was unemployed (Ramirez, 1974). Although the unemployment rates in the rural and urban zones are approximately the same, a substantially higher number of women are unemployed. For the country as a whole, 29 percent of women workers are unemployed as compared with 22 percent men.

Within the capital, Santo Domingo, the reported number of unemployed ranges from 20 percent (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 37) to 24 percent (Ramirez, 1974, p. 21). the same percentage as the entire country. In Santiago, the second largest city, some 10 percent are listed as unemployed (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 37).

Underemployment and low wages are also serious problems. The annual per capita income is reported at $406 (New York Times, September 28, 1975). Except for those in professional, managerial, and governmental categories, employment is often tenuous. For the subsistence farmers in the rural areas, yearly income fluctuates widely, depending on both weather and market conditions. Throughout the country, workers with no skills or with minimal skills, such as office clerical workers, taxi drivers, and blue collar or assembly workers, earn, in "good" months, usually no more than $100-$125. Domestics often work six days a week for $40-$50

a month. In many families these wage earners are the sole source of income.

Further evidence of economic problems for a large portion of the population is reflected inthe infant mortality and nutrition figures. The number of deaths per 1,000 of those one year old or less is 49 percent (New York Times, September 28, 1975). In addition, the statistics for 1969 show that 75 percent of the children under five years of age suffer from malnutrition (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 30).

The age distribution, employment, and infant nutritional conditions reported above are only indications of the serious problems that confront educational planners in a developing country. Not only are they attempting to eradicate the problems of the present but at the same time they must concern themselves with chronic conditions that continue to affect today's education. In 1970, 68 percent of the population over ten years of age was literate (Ramirez, 1974, p. 13). Table I compares the rates of literacy for 1960 and 1970. As might be expected, there are higher instances of illiteracy among the older population. The reported figures also show an increase over the 1960 literacy rate of 66 percent, an actual increment of some 462,000 persons for the decade. However, during this period the population in the ten-year-old and older group rose some 669,000. Therefore, from 1960 to 1970, the percentage of literacy in the ten-to-fourteen-year-old age group and the fifteen-to-nineteen-year-old age group, in fact, declined. It should also be noted that as of 1970 the ten-to-fourteen-year-old age group still had a higher percentage of illiterates than the fifteen-to-nineteen or the twenty-to-twenty-four-year-old age groups.

The factor of insufficient resources also affects the distribution and delivery of educational services. Twenty-five percent of the primary schools exist in urban areas and provide placement for 38 percent of the elementary age students (Marino Hernandez,

TABLE 1

Population and Literacy, 1960 and 1970

(By Age Groups)

Age Group	1960			1970		
	Population		% of Literate	Population		% of Literate
	Total	Literate		Total	Literate	
10-14	393,840	280,050	71.1	533,730	387,015	69.9
15-19	286,040	236,170	82.6	441,970	344,265	77.9
20-24	256,690	199,900	77.9	324,370	260,305	80.2
25-34	400,590	286,810	71.6	449,330	335,705	74.7
35-44	275,120	159,690	58.0	373,825	236,965	63.4
45-54	185,450	89,660	48.3	225,540	115,190	51.1
55-64	111,850	40,280	36.0	134,275	59,760	44.5
65 and over	90,430	24,210	26.8	121,720	39,930	32.8
Total	2,001,010	1,316,770	65.8	2,624,760	1,779,135	67.8

Source: Ramirez, 1974; p.50. Table was adapted and translated by author.

1974, p. 47). Fifty-one percent of the elementary school teachers are employed in the urban area schools. However, the majority of the student population attends rural schools. Although 75 percent of the schools and 62 percent of the primary students are in the rural areas, only 49 percent of the teaching force works there. The unequal distribution of students and teachers has serious consequences for classroom instruction. In urban areas, teachers have approximately 43 students per class while in rural areas the number rises to 73 students per teacher.

Despite this exceptionally high student/teacher ratio, it is still impossible to accommodate all school age children. The lack of a sufficient number of classrooms and teachers means that many children, particularly in the more rural areas, do not attend school. Of the children in the five-to-nine age group in 1970, 57 percent were not receiving instruction (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 29). It should be noted that this 57 percent included five- and six-year-olds and public school inscription does not begin until age seven. However, of students in the ten-to-fourteen age group, 22 percent were without instruction. In the 1968-69 school year approximately 61 percent of the rural schools had only four grades or less and only 11 percent provided all six years of primary education (Suárez Marill, 1970, p. 201).

The Organization of Primary Schools

To provide an educational program designed to reach as much of the population as possible, several forms of primary education have been adopted. The government recognizes three types of schools: official, semiofficial, and private. The official schools, maintained by public funds, constitute 72 percent of the existing primary schools; semiofficial schools, sustained in part by public funds, make up 14 percent,

and private schools, receiving no public monies, account for 15 percent (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 47). Grades 1-6 form the basic compulsory education of the country, and by law attendance is required of children between the ages of seven and fourteen in areas where there is an official school in existence.

Private and Semiofficial Schools

The Roman Catholic private school system always has been important in the educational history of the Dominican Republic but in recent years there has been a proliferation of private and proprietary schools. The political uncertainties and periodic disturbances that have occurred since the death of Trujillo in 1961 often have resulted in the closing of the public schools. Parents looking for a more stable school experience have turned to the privately run schools.

In 1961-62, private primary schools in urban areas represented 21 percent of the schools; by 1969-70, they had expanded to 34 percent of the total. Only about half the private school students were enrolled in the Roman Catholic parochial system (Centro de Investigación y Acción Social, 1972, p. 68).

In addition to the instability of the public educational systems, one can trace several other reasons for the expansion of privately run schools. The student population of public school age has increased beyond the point of accommodation in the existing schools. Many parents feel that the student/teacher ratio surpasses the level necessary to attain a quality education, and consequently seek private education. Although one could argue that private school teachers are needed in public schools, the public system still lacks sufficient funds for expansion to a full-capacity operating level.

The development of private schools also is related to the substantial increase in migration to the United States. Many parents must leave their children with family members while establishing themselves in New York City, and feel that a private school will provide extra security and stability. In other families one member, either the mother or father, comes to work in New York City but part of the improvement in life style for the family left in the Dominican Republic is a private education. In either case, the improved financial situation that comes as a result of the migration process provides the tuition money for many a private school student.

Yet another reason for the development of private schools is that economic opportunities and salaries for professionals are limited. For the qualified individual, opening a proprietary school offers economic advantages and also expands the market for teachers and other professionally trained persons.

Private (colegio) education should not, however, be equated with elitism as it often is in the United States. A small number of elitist private schools for the very wealthy have always existed in the Dominican Republic, but the majority of new schools do not fall into this category. One can find colegios in working-class barrios as well as in upper-middle-class neighborhoods. Private school tuition varies from $3 to $40 a month. In a survey of twenty-four Roman Catholic schools in the Dominican Republic in 1970-71, tuition costs in ten schools ranged from $10 to $18 monthly, in eight schools from $5 to $9, and in six others was $4 or less. The study estimates that the cost in the majority of private schools is less than $7 monthly (Centro de Investigación y Acción Social, 1972, pp. 79-80).

The educational programs and the socioeconomic characteristics of the student body are closely related to the tuition costs of a school. Schools at the upper limits

of the tuition scale are more likely to have extensive programs and middle- to upper-class student bodies. However, the majority of the schools are attended by children from the working- and lower-middle-class. Parents are office workers, store proprietors and clerks, factory workers, taxi drivers, and domestics, as well as blue collar and clerical workers in the United States. Thus, while private schools sort out children by socioeconomic class to some extent, the characteristics of the student population are much more similar to public schools than one would expect.

Further, a private school does not mean more resources, better trained teachers, or children without the medical, nutritional, and other economic problems of the poor. In general, except in the parochial schools of the Roman Catholic Church, studies have found that teachers in private schools are less prepared than those of the official schools (Centro de Investigación y Acción Social, 1972, p. 78).

Private schools do provide certain educational opportunities not available in public schools. Preprimary education for children under seven years of age is available only in the private sector. Some private schools admit children of two and one-half or three years and most begin formal educational training during these years. As soon as a child is ready, instruction in reading, writing, and math is begun. Philosophies and methods follow individual orientations, making it difficult to generalize about educational techniques and attainments.

As with all privately owned schools, the quality of instruction varies enormously. Children may spend several years in a nursery school and at age seven enter first grade only able to write the alphabet and their names. Other children actually begin first grade work at ages four or five and pass through corresponding grades at a much younger age.

The home school (escuela hogar) is a form of private and/or semiofficial school that provides still another alternative. The general purpose of the school is to provide an initial education, to teach the alphabet, numbers, writing (in the form of copying letters and sentences), and the basics of reading and arithmetic.

Such schools are actually held in the house of a "teacher," often a person in the neighborhood who can read and write and has had some school experience. Although there is no official information on the qualifications of these teachers, it is unlikely that any but a small minority have had teacher training preparation. Usually such a teacher has had children and is known as a dependable person. Schools are conducted in patios and/or the general living-eating room while the rest of the household continues on its daily routine in and around the children. The better equipped schools have small cane-seated chairs, and perhaps a desk or two, while other schools will use household furniture or even cement blocks for seats. Teachers most often own some form of blackboard and textbooks. Children attend from age five until age ten or twelve.

For many children the escuela hogar provides the primary school experience for several years. As in the public elementary schools, some schools meet in double sessions while others meet in the morning and afternoon, giving a child an all-day school experience. For some children the school functions as a supplemental educational experience. They attend a public or private school for half the day and the escuela hogar for the balance.

There are several reasons for the existence of this form of school. While children do not begin public elementary school until seven years of age, many parents recognize the fact that some children are ready to learn at four or five. For these children, the

escuela hogar is a "preschool" and they usually transfer to first grade at age seven. Other parents choose the escuela hogar because it allows them to keep the children in the neighborhood, often on the same block. In some neighborhoods attendance at a public school may mean traveling substantial distances and mothers are reluctant for younger children to be so far from home. In addition, mothers feel more secure because the person who runs the school is usually a neighbor. Class size may also be smaller, although officially this has not been verified. However, personal inspection of several of these schools reveals that from 20 to 25 children seem to be attending at one time.

Low tuition fees are yet another reason for widespread usage of the escuela hogar. There is no official list of fees but interviews reveal that in many schools children pay approximately 50 cents a week for instruction. This is one way of having private school instruction without substantial expense, particularly in poorer neighborhoods.

Because of the ad hoc basis of many home schools, accurate enrollment figures are unavailable. In 1962, a study reported 232 schools with an enrollment of 11,679 students (Cabreja de Machado, 1962, p. 15). The 1972-1973 enrollment figures show 44,098 students in semiofficial schools in urban areas[3] (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 47). However, the semiofficial school category includes other school types and many home schools do not have semiofficial status. A teacher with more than 50 students may apply for such status from the National Department of Education (Cabreja de Machado, 1962, pp. 15-16). This status implies official inspection, a salary of under $100 a month for the teacher, and some control over the financial charges made.

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[3]No figures were reported for the rural areas.

Although no official enrollment estimates exist, school officials indicate that the home schools educate a sizeable number of children.

Public Schools

The public primary school of grades 1-6 provides the basic educational experience for the majority of children. However, the increasing number of school age children, coupled with economic demands for a more highly educated work force, has placed intense pressures on the public school system. Economic resources, both of the country and of the populace, have not expanded at a pace that allows the country to provide sufficient education for all its population. The greatest problem for the public school system is poverty. At the national level, the lack of funds means insufficient facilities and personnel. At the student level, poverty is reflected in high student retention and repetition rates.

Teacher training. Despite whatever additional facilities the country is developing, the Dominican Republic continues to face a severe teacher shortage. To utilize most efficiently those persons who have been able to attend school, the country recognizes teachers with different levels of training. The best prepared teachers have obtained Licenciados (masters' degrees) or doctorates from one of the universities. Within the past ten years, universities have become increasingly important as teacher training centers. Enrollment figures for the three universities show that from 1921 to 1972 there were 1,403 graduates from university education programs (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 115). However, two of the universities were not formed until 1962 and 1966. An examination of 1970 enrollment figures in the faculties of education of the universities show 2, 363 students registered. The trend is toward the attendance at the universities

of increasing numbers of practicing teachers who are continuing preparation toward a Licenciado. In 1972, only 124 of the 10,772 primary teachers were university graduates while 161 of the 2,324 secondary teachers held university degrees (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 40, p. 59). Many university trained teachers elect to teach in the private school system, where they often receive higher salaries.

However, university programs are unable to supply a sufficient number of school personnel and, for many aspiring teachers, university training is beyond their economic means. Consequently, many enter the profession from the normal school and from regular secondary school programs.

In the 1972-73 school year, the five normal schools in the country had an enrollment of 607 students, with 53 professors. Approximately 20 percent of the primary and secondary teachers in 1972 were normal school graduates, while 62 percent of the secondary school teachers were regular high school graduates as were 28 percent of the primary teachers (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 48, p. 59).

In the secondary schools, all students complete a basic cycle of four years of general academic preparation and two more years in specialized tracks of humanities and sciences, technical-professional areas, commercial education, home economics, or the teacher training programs in normal schools. A teacher with normal school preparation has studied basic foundation courses in educational theory and methods and has had a period of supervised practice teaching. Other high school graduates learn teaching techniques directly from their classroom experiences.

The number of licensed teachers is inadequate, particularly in the elementary schools. To alleviate this condition the country allows experienced persons to teach without official licenses. In 1972, 50 percent of the elementary teachers and 4 percent of those teaching in secondary schools had no high school diploma. Most of

these teachers are in the rural area; 73 percent of rural teachers had no diploma as compared with approximately 9 percent of urban teachers (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 48, p. 59). Some of the teachers in this category will attend two to three months of summer courses in the normal schools, gaining the academic preparation while practicing.

The home schools (escuelas hogars) are often directed and taught by persons without high school degrees or formal teacher training. Since these schools are run on an ad hoc basis, the qualifications of the teachers are not accurately reflected in official statistics.

One of the major reasons for the lack of teachers in the public school system is the low salary scale. It is extremely difficult to find official information on teacher salaries. In fact, one study reports that the Secretary of Education recently revealed that 75 different types of salaries exist in the secondary system and some 23 types in the primary (Centro de Investigación y Acción Social, 1972, p. 68). However, teachers in personal interviews state that a public school teacher with a license earns approximately $100 to $125 monthly for a half-day session while those without a license earn $60 to $90 for the same period. Some teachers in rural areas receive only $65 to $80 monthly. To earn an adequate income, many teachers teach two sessions daily, giving them an approximate monthly income of $200. Whenever teachers are questioned about salary scales, they almost always reply, "Here, teachers are poor just like their students."

Student retention and repetition. Most children will begin school at age seven. However, few children complete the elementary sequence by the expected age and

many more fail to complete primary school at all. In general, 83 percent of those who enroll in first grade do not complete the sixth grade. In rural areas only 14 percent will graduate from sixth grade (Marino Hernandez, 1974, pp. 47-48).

Children of poor families leave school to work at an early age. Boys will be employed as farm workers, or assist parents in their own plot, particularly if the father works as a wage laborer. In the city, boys work in the streets cleaning shoes or selling papers at an early age (eight to nine), and when a little older (eleven to fifteen) will work as store clerks, errand boys, helpers in small businesses, or domestics. Girls more often help at home or hire out as domestics, in some cases as early as age eight or nine.

Irregular school attendance is, however, a more pervasive problem than a child's discontinuing school at an early grade. Economic pressures within households often take precedence over school attendance. Children stay home during a harvest season or a peak work time to help their families. To attend school, children also need uniforms and shoes, which many families are unable to afford. Even if the school directors are lenient in enforcing the requirement, and many are extremely sensitive to these problems, children still need some clothing. Lack of food in a household is another reason for staying home. Parents often say, "How can you send a child off to walk several kilometers and to work all morning in school, if you have no food to give him for breakfast?"

Poor attendance means that children do not complete a year of schooling and thus are retained in the same grade the following year. A study of the socioeconomic background of students held over substantiates the fact that students in this category most often come from lower socioeconomic class families. In the second largest city,

Santiago, 60 percent of the students retained were children of blue collar workers (obreros) and 36 percent of the parents were illiterate. In addition, the researchers found that the daily diets of these students were deficient in protein and they had only minimal clothing for school (Centro de Investigación y Acción Social, 1972, p. 84).

In urban areas the retention rate is 41 percent while the rate for rural areas is reported at 7 percent (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 47). An examination of first grade students in the 1968-69 academic year reveals that 31.6 percent were held over. The retention rate in second and third grades dropped to 12.6 percent and in fourth grade to 10.6 percent (Centro de Investigación y Acción Social, 1972, p. 77).

Figures alone do not give an adequate description of what a high retention rate means to classroom composition. Because of a starting age of seven years and a higher retention rate, the age level in all grades cannot be compared with the pattern in the United States. Table 2 shows the average age per grade for one 1969-70 academic year in Dominican public schools.

Table 2

Average Age Per Grade in Public Schools, 1969-70 Academic Year

Grade	Average Age
First	8.7
Second	10.1
Third	11.4
Fourth	12.3
Fifth	13.4
Sixth	14.4

Source: Centro de Investigación y Acción Social, 1972, p. 78.

While the age level per grade in private school is nearer the American average, it still does not correspond to chronological age groupings in corresponding grades of U. S. schools. By the time students reach fifth and sixth grades, many are beyond the compulsory age. Seventh and eighth grades become voluntary grades of teenage students.

Observations suggest that, as students progress through the elementary grades, those who are unable to adapt to a school environment gradually drop out. The dropouts include not only the economically poor but also the academically unsuccessful or behaviorally nonadapted student. By sixth grade, the majority of students still in attendance are those who have uniforms and books and for whom school has been more or less a successful experience. This does not mean that these students will continue, particularly in the rural areas, as high school attendance often involves traveling a substantial distance and more expense than a family can afford. However, an eighth grade education will place these individuals in the group of the better educated.

Classroom organization. As previously stated, the number of students per classroom is exceptionally high. The official average is 58.1 (Marino Hernandez, 1974, p. 47). In terms of actual daily attendance, I would estimate, on the basis of my observations, that many public school teachers have approximately 40 students at any one time in their rooms.

Students are heterogeneously grouped within graded classrooms. School directors, particularly of larger city schools, try to group by age as well as grade. If there are enough teenagers in sixth grade, there may be older and younger sixth grade classes.

(Grouping in this fashion does not reduce the number of students per teacher.) However, in most grades children will vary in age, and upon entering any classroom one sees a wide range of children of different ages and at various levels of physical maturation.

Because of limited resources, children of varying academic abilities are placed together. In recent years, university trained teachers have been attempting to group students by ability within classes. Students still use basically the same material; however, expectations and the pace vary according to group labels.

Students are arranged in rows, usually in chairs with writing arms. Some schools still use attached bench and desk combinations and it is not unusual to see four or five little children crowded onto a bench. In the more rural areas, teachers complain that often there are not enough seats or desks for students (Ahora, 1972, p. 13). Then students use stools, cement blocks, or, as a last resort, the floor. The only other furniture in most classrooms is a small table with a shallow center drawer, and a chair for the teacher. Both students and teachers bring to school daily whatever books and supplies are going to be needed.

Blackboards complete the classroom furnishings. The rooms are rarely decorated with charts, pictures, book corners, or any of the standard learning environment materials of U. S. classrooms. Whatever maps or charts that may be used for teaching purposes (if the school has these supplies) are shared by the entire faculty and brought into class when needed.

Teaching style. The presentation of curriculum material is strikingly similar throughout the country (see Appendix for more detail). Teachers describe the learning

process as having the following steps: reading and comprehension of the assignment, application of the material, and testing for retention. This format underlies the organization of all student-teacher interaction.

Students first read an assignment, a page or two from the appropriate text, usually as homework. To begin the lesson, the teacher conducts individualized oral reading, and then expands on or paraphrases the material. Next, to test comprehension, the teacher orally questions the class.

The formation of the questions closely follows the word order of the written material. If the book discusses the function of a leaf, the question will be asked as "What is the function of the leaf?" Students respond either individually or as a class depending upon the particular goals of the teacher. Their responses repeat the word order from the text, i.e. "The function of a leaf is _____."

Depending upon the material, the teacher will then use the blackboard to draw a diagram or write a summary of the material, or pose questions to be answered from the text, and students will make entries in their notebooks. By sixth grade, students are expected to write their own summaries and/or notebook entries on the important points to be remembered for examinations.

Most study units, particularly in science and social studies, are presented in the above format. The questioning pattern followed by the teacher is an essential element in the learning process because it serves both as a summarization and a brief test of retention.

Formal examinations complete the curriculum presentation. Test format may include true-false, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, definitions, and diagram identifications. Additionally, the word structure of many of the test questions

repeats or paraphrases the style of question presented in the classroom.

Students are examined by teacher-made tests three times a year in all subject areas. Many teachers also give examinations more often, indicating student progress on a monthly basis. At the end of the sixth grade, students must pass a national examination in all subjects to enter the secondary school cycle.

Report cards appear three times a year. Formal examination grades as well as classroom recitation, notebook, and homework are the basis of evaluation. Marks are reported in percentages, with 60 a minimal pass. On the basis of personal observation, grades in the 70's and 80's appear to be most frequent. Good students seem to score in the upper 80's with a grade or two in the 90's.

Teacher-student interaction. The curriculum presentation format places the teacher in almost continual interaction with students. First, a teacher does little administrative work in the classroom beyond taking attendance; therefore, all the time in the school period is used in teaching. Second, the teaching style, for much of the school day, places the teacher physically close to the students. Moving from a position at the blackboard, a teacher spends the majority of the time walking up and down rows, looking at notebooks, or stopping near students when asking questions. Very rarely does a teacher work at a desk while students work at their own desks. Third, the explaining-questioning format places students in individualized contact with the teacher. Every class period is like a personal oral examination.

Teachers maintain a rapid pace, with few lulls in the session. When an assignment is put on the board to copy, students are expected to copy rapidly. The teacher walks around looking at the progress being made and when most have finished, the material

on the board is erased and another section of the lesson begins. This usually has the effect of hurrying up the slower students.

Questioning on material also moves rapidly. If one student does not know an answer, another student is asked after a short wait. Children are encouraged to read at a normal pace and to know their recitations well enough to get through them without spending time staring into space trying to remember. Grades for classroom work evaluate the student's ability to work promptly as well as recall of the content. Two students may recite a passage accurately but the one who does it more quickly or with better pronunciation receives a higher grade.

A frequent comment made by teachers is that they have a feeling of urgency in teaching their students. Half-day sessions shorten the student contact hours. In addition, teachers state that because of the external economic problems, they have many students who will not be able to attend regularly or even remain in school and who therefore must take full advantage of whatever time they do have.

An example of the effect of these factors can be observed in the schedule followed by one top-tracked sixth grade. At 8 a.m. grammar begins, with an explanation of a diagram on the blackboard depicting the use of persons, voices, modes, and tenses. The teacher lectures about twenty minutes. Then students read some related material from the Spanish grammar text and the teacher quizzes them on the book and diagram material. They are given five minutes to copy the diagram and then given a homework assignment.

At 8:45 arithmetic begins. The teacher asks for an explanation of the rules of division of whole numbers by decimal fractions. After three or four students have recited, she begins to correct an exam from the previous day. One student works

on a problem at the blackboard while the teacher quizzes the class orally on the process of moving decimal points and adding zeros. "Why did she do that? What operation is she using?" She sends more students to the board to do problems from the test, moves around the room continuing the questioning, and at the same time checks the math notebooks. By 9:05 students have completed a recitation of rules, three practice problems with oral explanations, and six problems from the exam. This continues until the end of the period at 9:20. The teacher has described the division procedure, using the test as an explanatory instrument, the students have been quizzed orally, and their written work has been corrected.

After a two to three minute rest during which students get out their science books and the teacher explains the next step to the observer, the class begins a botany lesson with a summary of a previous discussion. This takes the form of teacher-directed questions. "What are the parts of the flower?" Students, as a group, respond with a rote recitation. The questioning continues on major points for about five minutes. The teacher then draws a diagram of the parts of a flower on the board. When she finishes, the questioning begins again on the pollination process and the function of flower parts. Then a student is asked to read the first paragraph from the science book. Another student is questioned in a manner that allows a paraphrase of the material just read. By 10:00 the class begins the second page of the day's assignment. Those students without books are copying the text material while listening. After reading, students are given time to write summaries in their notebooks. The teacher then gives a botany homework assignment and at 10:45 an anatomy class begins. The day continues in this manner until 12:00.

Obviously, this teacher was able to move rapidly with a top-track class. However,

it should be noted that this school was in an economically poor neighborhood, many students had to share books, and the school had almost no supplies. The teacher was by no means teaching in even average conditions for urban schools in the Dominican Republic. In classes of slower learners, teachers cover less material at one time but the rapid-fire questions, the short time for completing board work, and the overall pace are the same.

Students compete to be called upon and recite. Recognition and recitation give them direct contact with the teacher. In addition, there is immediate feedback from the teacher evaluating their performance.

With this teaching style, it is the teacher who organizes how time is allocated during the day. There is little time for student-directed interaction except during the fifteen minute recess.

Discipline. Discipline also tends to be individualized. Teachers do not appear to spend much time lecturing an entire class. Instead, the movement of the teacher allows nonverbal discipline. Talking students will stop as the teacher approaches and those daydreaming or watching others will be physically turned around in their seats. Sprawling students can be poked to sit up straight and the snap of fingers carries a message to the other side of the room. Close interaction allows the teacher to see if books are open or notebooks are on the desk. Often the teacher will take out the book, open it to the correct page, and hand it to the student while carrying on a lecture or questioning session.

School starts more or less on time. Unless a school is equipped with clocks and a bell system, it is difficult to follow a rigid time schedule since many teachers do not

have watches.

Schools open with a flag ceremony, if they have space and the flag, and students usually pass in lines to their classrooms. They file to the class in order but not silently. While teachers worry about loud, boisterous noise, they usually do not comment on the usual chatting and giggling.

Classrooms are rarely quiet. The sharing of supplies and books necessitates moving and, often, talking. Siblings come or students leave to get pencils or notebooks that may be in other rooms. Teachers do not sanction disruptive movement but in general classes are not silent rooms with children sitting, hands folded on the desks.

During individual reading or oral recitation, those who have already recited often will whisper with a seatmate or work on another project. If this is done unobtrusively, it appears not to be punished. In more advanced grades, teachers appear to expect greater attention and glare more often at talking students. However, it is the responsibility of the student to pay attention and learn. As long as a student's inattentiveness is not disturbing the class, it does not become a focal point for discipline. Thus, disturbances to the lesson are minimized.

The teaching style, a relaxed attitude toward routine, a tolerance of movement, and a relatively high noise level create a classroom atmosphere where discipline does not become a central issue. School directors and teachers say that discipline is not one of their problems and observation appears to support this.

Teacher-student relationship. Educational literature in the United States often describes a Latin American teacher as an authoritarian figure to be feared. "The ascribed role of a teacher in many respects parallels that of the Dominican father:

stern, autocratic, demanding, deserving unquestioned deference"(Hendricks, 1974, p. 134). Certainly, children are told that teachers are like parents and must be respected as one respects a mother or father. However, respect for the teacher needs to be placed in the perspective of overall teacher-student relationships in and outside of school.

In the rural areas, teachers are often members of the community or at least live there during the school week. Consequently, students and teachers share many events outside of the classroom. Teachers know family members and share friendships with adults who may be relatives or neighbors of the students. They are aware of what is happening in the lives of students.

Students interact with teachers as they do with others of the same age groups. If the teachers are young, they may be in the friendship group of the students' older siblings. While in class students address teachers as maestra or profe, outside of class they are more often addressed on a first name basis. At recess and after school, students and teachers form groups that joke about friends and predicaments or discuss and organize sport events.

If the teachers are older, students adopt the behavior they use with aunts, uncles, godparents, and/or older residents in the area. They are more likely to discuss with them the local "gossip" - events that are happening in the lives of their families, or peer problems. As the teachers usually know the individuals involved, they also are sharing information and participating ir the conversations.

Urban areas provide a somewhat different situation. Teachers, particularly those who work in poor neighborhoods, do not necessarily live near the school. Commuting time and the fact that some teachers work morning and afternoon shifts in different

schools reduces the time teachers are available. However, teachers do talk to parents when they come to school. It is not unusual for a teacher to delay starting a session or to interrupt a lesson to spend a few minutes with a parent. Teachers also stop and talk to parents they meet on the street as they go to and from the school. Students still share many of their problems with teachers; consequently, although teachers may not be in a position to observe, they usually know if a problem exists.

In both urban and rural areas, student attitudes about the role of a teacher are similar. Older persons are expected to have more experience and if they are giving information or showing one how to do something, then, children state, they need to listen. Learning from a teacher is a formalization of the process of learning from other adults. Students say that they have to pay attention to the teacher because the teacher is the adult with specific academic knowledge. Therefore, the carryover of learning by listening to and observing older community members, is the essence of the analogy of the teacher to a mother or father figure rather than the fear of discipline or the sense of being under control.

Student Life Out of School

Just as the expectations of adults and teacher-student interaction outside the classroom in the larger community influences school life, so the structure of the school day greatly influences children's life styles outside of school. The half-day school schedule leaves a large amount of the day for peer activities and adult interaction.

This section is meant to give teachers some impressions of children's play and work activities after school. Because the overall project was designed to explore school behavior, observations of out-of-school activities were not done systematically.

However, some general observations will be offered below.

Whatever the socioeconomic position or the geographical location of the home, there is one fundamental similarity. Children's role behavior is sharply differentiated by sex. Even the physical location of children outside of school differs according to male-female distinctions. Girls' activities are usually confined to house and patio areas while the domain of the boys extends to the streets and life outside the home.

The extent to which children participate in household activities and responsibilities varies according to the family's socioeconomic position. Domestics are employed in most middle- and upper-class homes. However, such families are only a small percentage of the population of the country. Since the majority of the population and the majority of migrants to New York City occupy lower socioeconomic class positions, the life styles described in this section will try to be representative of the larger segment of the population.

Girls begin to participate actively in the household at an early age. Between six and eight years, they start to help with cooking, laundry, and caring for younger siblings.

Since many homes, both urban and rural, lack running water, children make many trips to the public spigots or rivers to fill the water jugs. Depending upon the distance, girls may go with adult females or accompanied by peers. This task consumes substantial time daily and is one of the major forms of socializing for females of all ages.

Girls' play activities are carried on within the house or household patio. Children, whether boys or girls, do not have many toys. Frequently, households contain no commercially produced toys. Girls adapt tin cans, sticks, and whatever they pick

up for house games. Much time is spent in the company of girl friends, talking or just sitting together. Whatever the activity, there is one notable observation. Girls are missing from the street.

Boys spend much more time than girls outside the household. Because they can move over a wider geographic area, they become involved in many different activities. More time is spent in organized peer activities, such as baseball, running freely to friends' houses, or roaming the streets or countryside.

In addition, free time is spent watching and at times participating in adult work activities outside the home. In a household where labor is needed, boys assist their fathers or male relatives in farming tasks or local cottage industries. In other households, participation occurs on a less organized basis and children help by doing small tasks or errands when needed. Within the household, boys usually are assigned the daily marketing errands.

Most of the skills learned by children are not taught directly by parents or other adults. Children learn by observation and participation. If the task is not being done correctly, the parent will give a suggestion but one rarely hears a list of instructions being given to a child.

Teachers state that sex role differences are reflected in the child's classroom performance. Boys are often more assertive in class and better in mathematics. Teachers believe that this is a result of their involvement in activities such as using money in buying from the stores at an early age. Girls, teachers state, are better readers and more sensitive to language art skills.

The Educational Priority

Whatever difficulties educators and students in the Dominican Republic encounter

within the educational process, education itself is accorded the highest priority throughout the country. Certainly, many classroom teachers and school directors engage in herculean efforts to fulfill their responsibilities. Often this means teaching without electricity in the classroom or even with no learning materials. Despite these obstacles, the majority of those observed conduct classroom programs that allow students to meet the country's educational standards.

The concern for education extends beyond those immediately charged with responsibility for educational planning and instruction. University professors and clergy, professionals and workers, and parents and students often engage in planning conferences and campaigns for improvement and change.

An immediate result of these activities has been the undertaking of an extensive reform program. The pressure continues for new schools, additional classrooms, and teacher recruitment. Currently, 19 percent of the national budget is allocated to education and there is a persistent lobby for more monies.

In addition, the Secretary of State for Education has announced a potentially far-reaching curriculum reform (Secretaria de Estado de Educación, 1975). Educators recognize that absenteeism and the high retention rate with the subsequent overage of students cause significant educational, social, and economic problems. The curriculum reform stresses the need to make the learning process more relevant to rural and urban students. One goal is to introduce curriculum materials that will help to prepare students more adequately for the realities of life. Another suggestion is to establish learning environments that will keep students in school. To accomplish these aims, the reform stresses developing an integrated curriculum and a change in teaching methods. Ways to create experimental, investigative, and individualized

curricula are being discussed and introduced in numerous schools. Teachers are encouraged to allow more student participation in classroom activities and to modify the traditional teacher-centered format to one emphasizing student equality and individuality.

Another manifestation of the priority attached to education is demonstrated by the involvement of adults in continuing education programs. Although many have had to leave school before obtaining the desired level of education, dropping out of the regular school track does not necessarily mean disengagement from academic involvement. As the economic base of the country shifts from a subsistence agricultural orientation towards an industrial marketing one, more and more individuals are expressing the need for acquiring literacy and additional education.

A primary school evening program for those over 14 years of age has extensive enrollment. Personal observations and interviews reveal the majority of students to be between 20 and 30 years of age and to have left school at a young age because of family economic needs. Many secondary school students attend evening division programs in addition to holding fulltime day employment. For the most part, these students also tend to be in the 20- to 30-year-old age group.

The Roman Catholic Church and the Secretary of State for Education both maintain fairly extensive literacy programs. One of the most successful and unique programs, under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church, is Radio Santa Maria. Throughout the central area of the country, the radio is used daily to broadcast the primary school curriculum as well as relevant programs designed to reach workers, particularly the peasant farmers. Over 15,000 persons are enrolled as active students in the correspondence program, and in 1975, 6,000 received sixth and eighth grade

certificates (Listin-Diario, Supplement, 26 Julio 1975).

Primary and secondary education in the Dominican Republic, therefore, is not an activity relegated to young children and adolescents. Throughout the urban and rural areas, particularly in the working-class barrios, many adults are active students, often engaged in learning the same material as the younger members of the community.

Implications

Dominican children coming to the United States bring with them certain expectations based on their experiences in their native educational system. Major influences on these expectations are the high priority placed on education in the Dominican Republic and the Dominican definition of the teacher's role in education.

One manifestation of the high priority attached to education in the Dominican Republic is the involvement of adults in continuing education programs. This means that elementary and secondary school students have numerous adult role models actively involved in learning experiences. Although no studies appear to have explored the influence of such role models on the attitudes and performance levels of the younger students, continuing adult participation in school activities reveals a heightened community consciousness of local school needs and problems, with students, teachers, and community members frequently working together to seek improvement. Migration changes all of this. Dominican students find themselves attending schools embedded in a different social context, a context in which the central position of education as a community phenomenon is radically altered.

Teachers in New York classrooms interpret their professional roles quite differently from the teachers the Dominican students are used to. American teachers, like their Dominican counterparts, establish the classroom style and atmosphere, but in the

United States there is less emphasis on completely teacher-dominated situations. This means an absence of the continual verbal and nonverbal interaction to which Dominican students have been accustomed in their teacher-centered classrooms back home. For many Dominican students, this leads to confusion. Lack of the immediate feedback that is a result of the lecture-questioning pattern means that the students are denied their traditional reinforcement cues. They are often uncertain about what the teacher is stressing in a lesson, whether they are mastering it as she wishes, and what kind of evaluation the teacher is making of their performance. Furthermore, although the American teacher may regard lack of marked structure in a class as a means of helping students develop their own thinking processes and skills, the Dominican child often interprets the lack of continuous teacher interaction as evidence of the teacher's lack of concern for the child's achievement in school. These conflicting interpretations can lead to a feeling of social distance between students and teachers.

Teachers in New York do not face the educational and economic problems that affect the teaching situation in the Dominican Republic. Teachers in New York have full-day programs and can reasonably expect more regular attendance and a much lower dropout rate, at least in elementary grades, than Dominican teachers can. The prolonged contact with students, along with access to a myriad of learning materials (not available in the Dominican Republic) allows New York teachers to present the curriculum at a slower pace and with many more embellishments than Dominican students are used to. When the students compare what they cover in the course of the school year in New York with the situation in the Dominican Republic, they usually remark that they do not learn as much in U. S. schools. It does not seem to

occur to them that they may be learning different skills.

Finally, the slower pace in the classroom, combined with the change in teacher interaction patterns, is subject to additional interpretations by Dominican students. Not used to free time or less structured time periods during the day, they label these periods as wasting time. Many are also uncertain of the role of the student during these periods, since the teacher often does not fully define it for them.

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APPENDIX

PRIMARY SCHOOL FORMAL CURRICULUM

The curriculum for public primary school (Marino Hernandez, 1974, pp. 190-191) has been officially established as follows:

	Hours Weekly
Spanish Language Arts	5
Mathematics	5
Social Studies	5
Natural Sciences	5
Artistic, Manual, and Physical Education	5
	25

However, the half-day schedule does not permit a teacher to cover all subjects in the prescribed manner. Most teachers seem to adapt the schedule as follows: Spanish Language Arts are taught every day and include oral reading, reading comprehension, dictation, grammar, spelling, and handwriting; mathematics is also taught daily, with arithmetic four times a week and geometry once a week. (The division in all areas, of course, changes both according to individual teacher preferences and to a teacher's specific lesson goals.)

Social studies and science are divided into specific subjects. Geography and history are taught as separate subjects two days a week. Civics, taught once a week, completes the social science curriculum. Science subjects--zoology, anatomy, botany and physical science--are covered weekly. Thus students receive some science subject matter daily. Health, taught once a week, completes the curriculum.

Schools in the Dominican Republic seem to follow some of the characteristics of schools in the United States. Subjects like health, civics, art, and physical education are taught if personnel and resources exist and are expendable if rescheduling must occur.

Students evaluate their yearly progress by the number of subjects they take. Separate notebooks are kept for each subject. Consequently, students state that they take many more subjects in the Dominican Republic than in the United States and present this information as one piece of evidence that schooling there is a more difficult process.

What follows is a breakdown by grade of the curriculum sequence. Information is drawn from the official primary school curriculum guide (Secretaria de Estado de Educación, 1969) personal observations, and teacher interviews.

When children enter first grade, they are immediately plunged into an academic program. They sit, sometimes lost, in regular-sized chairs, in rows, with notebooks and pencils. Except in the elitist private schools, children bring only assigned textbooks, which they must purchase. Teachers have no access to manipulative materials, workbooks, audiovisual, or other forms of teaching aids. The extent of materials depends entirely upon a teacher's creativity and ability to draw on the blackboard.

Math and reading are begun immediately. Students copy numbers and words with phonetic breakdown from the board. They also practice handwriting exercises. The

teacher leads recitation sessions of the written work and corrects letter and number formation in individual notebooks.

Children are taught to read by a combination of whole-word and phonetic approaches. In addition to reading from primers, most teachers create board exercises such as the news for today, weather, current events, or little stories. This material is designed to give awareness of the world, preliminary science and social studies data, and vocabulary, reading, and writing development. Depending upon the orientation of the teacher, children may be involved in developing this material or may just copy what is given.

Informally, teachers say about 70-80 percent of first grade students are able to read by the end of the grade. Because of the lack of access to books, students read only their reading books, but many appear to learn to decode words during this year. It is difficult to measure the transferability of this skill to material outside the stylized reading book.

Teachers in rural areas tend to believe that many children need two years to learn the first reading skills. They point out that visual stimulation and the opportunity to see printed material, in the form of signs, advertisements, newspapers, and so on, is very limited, thus reducing both the number of skills a child brings to school and the opportunity to practice newly acquired skills.

Although children start writing with block letters, they are taught cursive writing very early, and by second grade all copying is done in this form.

Mathematical concepts are introduced by pictures and lines. A teacher draws two flowers, adds two more, and demonstrates the sum of four flowers and then the corresponding numbers. Children are taught to think of sets being added or subtracted.

From observation, I would judge that new mathematics principles are used to explain and develop computation skills. In later grades, children learn associative and distributive principles but the emphasis seems to be on computation and less on theoretical underpinnings. At the end of first grade, children know number order at least to 100, and they can do addition and subtraction without carrying and simple word problems. They also learn basic shapes as an introduction to geometry.

A more formal division of the curriculum begins in second grade. The format in reading and language arts is established at this time and changes little for the remainder of primary school. A student is called to the front of the class to read part of the daily assignment. He/she is instructed to stand straight with feet together, left hand down at the side, holding the book in the right hand at chest level about ten inches away from the body. Student after student reads either a paragraph or a page, depending on the length of the assignment, returning to the beginning and rereading until all have had a turn. As many do not have their own books, books are passed along the row. Other language art work consists of copying a paragraph from the reading book, if there are enough to be shared, or material from the blackboard. At this time, grammatical concepts are also introduced through discussing and copying rules and completing "fill-in-the-blank" exercises.

In second grade, students further develop addition and subtraction skills by learning carrying and borrowing concepts. Multiplication is introduced, along with division as a reciprocal process. Students begin to memorize the multiplication tables and do simple problems ($2 \times 2 = 4$). In third and fourth grades, teachers continue testing the student's mastery of the multiplication tables. The multiplication process is introduced fully in the

third grade along with simple division problems. In the fourth through sixth grades both processes become increasingly complex. In sixth grade mathematics students also study fractions, decimals, and percentages, and the basic computational skills for each, and do increasingly sophisticated word problems.

Third grade students are expected to become familiar with the basic vocabulary for geometry and begin simple computations of area and perimeter. Calculation problems continue in advanced grades, and by the end of sixth grade students should be able to compute the areas and perimeter of triangles, rectangles, squares, trapezoids, and rhomboids. They should also be able to compute the volume of cubes, calculate the diameters and circumferences of circles, and solve angle and line segment problems.

Social studies in second and third grade centers around the family and the community and begins to explore the history and geography of the country. In fourth and fifth grade, students learn in detail the history of the Domincan Republic and the Caribbean-Latin American area. In sixth grade world history is taught. Beginning with fourth grade, students study the geography of individual countries, learning basic topographical facts as well as information on resources, products, and exports.

The first and second grade science curriculum introduces students to the human body, domestic animals, plants, minerals, food, and the principles of natural phenomenon. Beginning in third grade, students receive extensive instruction in anatomy, zoology, botany, and physical science. In anatomy classes, students study muscles, organs, skeletal parts and their functions, and the circulatory system. The general characteristics and anatomical features of anthropoids, mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, mollusks, and bacteria are studied in zoology. Botany curriculum in grades three to six includes study

of the classification and functions of plants, plant reproducation, and economic food usages. The planetary systems, electricity and magnetism, and refraction form the material of the physical science program.

Very few of the textbooks used in the Dominican Republic are available in this country. However, two books for fourth and fifth grades that have detailed information on the history and geography of the country are often available in the Spanish-language bookstores on 14th Street in New York City and in some of the bookstores in Dominican neighborhoods. They are Geographia de Mi Patria and Historia de Mi Patria by Luis N. Nũnes Molina (Ediciones Escolares "La Escuela Nueva"). Two bookstores in Santo Domingo that supply school textbooks are:

Liberia Nacional
Calle Arz. Novel
Santo Domingo, D.N. Republica Dominicana

Liberia Dominicana
Calle Mercedes
Santo Domingo, D.N. Republica Dominicana